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Robbins Tavern Sign
Courtesy of Morgan B. Brainard and The Wadsworth Atheneum

THREE QUESTIONS

Historians of Wethersfield have taken pride in referring to the Robbins house, in Stepney Parish, now Rocky Hill, as the Duke of Cumberland Tavern, because of the signboard bearing the Duke's likeness which was preserved in the house.

No one has ever brought up the question why "the wealthiest man in the state" (according to those same historians) should have kept a tavern in "the finest house in the state." Of course there was no discredit in keeping a tavern and the owners of a great many prosperous homes, situated on the Post Roads, supplemented their income and rendered a public service by taking in travelers.

At any rate Robbins seems to have done this, which brings us to our second question. Why did an American patriot, when the Revolutionary pot was at least steaming, for the sign is dated 1773, give to his home the name of an English general, the Duke of Cumberland, who was a hero of a generation previous? Here he is, on the sign, booted and spurred, with cocked hat and pistol holsters, riding on a prancing Percheron.

Question number two has not been answered but here may be a clue. When the weathered sign was being studied to learn the details of its design and colors from the traces of paint which still adhered, an earlier
R
set of initials were detected under the I S which stood for John and
P
Sarah Robbins. They proved to be O M and a hurried consultation with the Wethersfield historical bible, Stiles History, showed only one couple to whom they could have belonged, Oliver Pomeroy and his wife Mary (Lyman). Traces of an earlier date were found also, but they were too indistinct to be deciphered.

Oliver lived in another section of the town from the Robbins house. His home was at the landing, where he was a merchant with a store and lighters to unload ships. But what interests us most is that he, too, kept a tavern, famous in Rocky Hill history as "The Long House," but not referred to as "The Duke of Cumberland."

Dr. Rufus W. Griswold, writing in 1887 in Stiles History, says, "Nor can I learn when Oliver Pomeroy came here." That question is unanswered but we know just about when he came, if not the actual date. The Pomeroy Genealogy shows that he was born in 1729, son of Captain John Pomeroy, of Northampton, Massachusetts, and that he married in 1750. That same year, at the age of twenty, he bought property at the Landing and apparently began operations as a trader. Shortly thereafter he built or added to "The Long House." He became a respected citizen as was shown by the fact that he was a member of the committee organized to keep watch on those suspected of British sympathies. He served in the militia, starting as private and rising to the rank of Captain. He died in 1776.

Question three follows naturally. How did the Oliver Pomeroy sign get from the landing to John Robbins' house while Pomeroy was still living and keeping his tavern? To a Connecticut Yankee the obvious answer is that John, another Connecticut Yankee, found it cheaper to use a discarded sign than to buy a new one. Almost every sign shows evidences of repainting, although usually it is done because of a change of owners of the tavern and not because of a sale of the sign.

Before we write FINIS we record the fact that a few years ago an enterprising real estate agent, with much publicity, sold "The Long House" to be taken down and moved out of the state, despite the fact that in 1887 Dr. Griswold records that it had been demolished fifty years before.

NEWS OF THE SOCIETY

The late George Dudley Seymour left the Society the remaining copies of *A History of The Seymour Family,* published by him in 1939. These volumes are to be sold for the benefit of the library.

ON THE LIBRARIAN'S DESK

Recently we have desired information on two Hartford artists and have been amazed at the scarcity of available material. Since this Library is the logical source for data on Connecticut people, these questions will arise again. It seems wise to request our readers for reminiscenses now, while still fresh in their memories and in so doing, commence a portfolio on these men. We cannot stress too much that today's events are tomorrow's history. Your letters will be carefully filed for future reference.

Charles Russell Loomis, who may have taught art to many of our members, is an illusive figure when definite information concerning him is desired. He painted the portrait of Dr. Gurdon Wadsworth Russell (1815-1909), which we received from the estate of Alice Gertrude Tuttle in 1941. This portrait was illustrated in the *Bulletin* for January, 1942. Anything you can tell us about him will be welcomed.

George A. Gilbert, an Englishman with quite a reputation, came to Hartford in 1874 and died here December 23, 1877. His characteristic success was in drawing forest-trees, either in oil, water-color, pencil, crayon, pen or chalk. Examples of his work are coming on the market and purchasers are requesting information which we are unable to supply.

The following acrostic was written and signed by Henry Clay Work in the memory book of Sophia Adelaide Boardman, Hartford, November 9, 1852. Work, born in Middletown, was an apprentice in the printing shop of Elihu Geer and even at this early date, entertained friends with songs of his own composition. "Marching through Georgia" and "Grand-

father's Clock" were perhaps his best known songs, the latter selling more than 800,000 copies. He published seventy-three songs according to family sources, though copies are not available here.

Songs of Praise are always ringing through the golden courts above:
Night and day are angels singing—"Glory to the God of Love."
O, that mortal ears could hear them! O that mortal eyes could see!
And that we were ever near them—Ever like them, pure and free.
Perfect peace, that priceless treasure, then would bless the sons of earth
Making them to share that pleasure, which is of an heavenly birth
Hope would point the sick and sighing to the distant temple dome
Dry their tears and talk of dying, simple as a going home
It were then our exaltation to indulge while here below.
Rich and free anticipation of the future for we know
Anthem songs are always ringing through the golden courts above
Angels night and day are singing, "Glory to the God of Love".
And, if mortal ears could hear them, it would be our earnest plea
O that we were ever near them, kindred spirits, pure and free
Doubting friends, though pain and sorrow haunt you through this dismal night
Bear them boldly and tomorrow, yours are yonder realms of light
Endless praise, your only treasure, then you'll give and still confess
Yours are joys of boundless measure, perfect peace and righteousness
Loudly too, you'll tell the story, till with joy from east to west
Rings that world of light and glory, mansion of eternal rest
And while angel songs are ringing through the golden courts above
Ransomed souls shall join in singing, "Glory to the God of Love".
Instant then our ears shall hear them, eyes as dim as ours shall see
Even we shall worship near them, ransomed like them, even we
Dear companions ever boldly may you hasten on your way
Though the winds of life blow coldly, though the world should bid you stay
Every strife shall make you stronger, if you conquer as you go
Hope on, then a few days longer, crowns await you, for you know
Blessed songs are always ringing through the golden courts above
Angels night and day are singing, "Glory to the God Above".
O that mortal ears could hear them, and that our poor souls could be
Ready for a mansion near them, soon as death shall set us free.
All of us like sheep were going, from our Father's fields away,
Asking mirth, but never knowing that Death had marked us for his prey.
Rising breezes bore our story from the borders of the grave
Swiftly to the realms of glory, whence was sent an arm to save
Down to this dark earth descending, Jesus wandered to and fro
Deigned to die and died defending souls from everlasting woe
Matchless songs for this are ringing through the golden courts above
Night and day are angels singing, "Glory to the God of Love".
And if mortal ears could hear them, surely we should wish to be
Always in the temple near them, where they shout with holy glee
Noise the story, worlds of glory, Christ has set his people free.

IN THE MUSEUM

The graphic illustration of how much can be done with little money, presented in our last *Bulletin,* met with varied response. We did receive some money, we did receive encouragement, and we did bring the matter to the attention of all.

It has been suggested that we be more specific and in that way perhaps find others sufficiently interested to aid financially in preservation and restoration of priceless and irreplaceable objects.

At the present time we are having a Revolutionary flag preserved. The method employed is approved by State officials and the Navy Department. If this had not been done now it would have been too late, for portions had commenced to disintegrate. The estimated cost of this restoration is $100.00.

A beautiful embroidered stumpwork panel depicting Solomon and the Queen of Sheba in a garden, recently discovered in one of our storage rooms, has been cleaned and repaired. This picture was made in 1661 and was left a Thomas Booth Fox in 1786 by Anne Fox. How it came into our possession we do not yet know, for it has been "lost" since before Mr. Bates joined the Society. The work done on this piece was necessary to preserve it and the results of the cleaning appear well worth the cost of $70.00. Contributions to either or both projects are needed and donors may be assured their gift will be appreciated by future generations. Furthermore, you may have the opportunity of actually seeing the finished product of your generosity for both the flag and panel are on exhibition in the Museum in their restored condition.

Miss Sarah G. Holcomb of Collinsville recently presented us with a painting of the Red School House at the foot of Barnes' Hill in Burlington, on the road between Burlington Station and the Center. The mother, brothers and sister of the donor attended this school. It was painted by the late Aage Moll of Hartford and for the present is hanging in the Museum.

KELSEY PAPERS

The Connecticut Courant, June 12, 1821 has the following news item: "Killed by lightning in Berlin on Thursday, the 31st ult. Miss Mary Hooker, aged 28. One other female was struck in the same house and taken up for dead, but has since partially recovered."

The early newspapers carried numerous such stories relating tragic deaths. Then, as now, violence seemed to be essential on the front page. That it made marked impression on someone is illustrated by the unknown young lady who took pen in hand and wrote the following verses. She was undoubtedly one of the daughters of Stephen and Hannah (Hart) Kelsey, probably Lucy born in 1800 or 1802 since it was found in a group of her papers recently secured by the Society.

Mary or "Polly" Hooker, daughter of Elijah and Susannah (Judd) Seymour Hooker, was born in Kensington, March 24, 1791.

Composed on the death of Polly Hooker May the 31, 1821

1

Poolly is gone her spirret fled,
She now is nuberd with the dead,
That dart of lightning round her herld,
And sent her to the eternal world,

2

She was in health with prospect bright,
And breathless corpse before 'twas night,
the blow was struck and soon she fell,
Not time to bid her friends farewell,

3

Her friends now stand and weep and mourne,
To see her laid in silent sleep,
And there to lie in that cold bed,
Till earth and sea give up their dead,

4

Her friends no more will hear her voice,
With her no more will they regoice,
She wings her way to worlds unknown,
Without a struggle or a groan,

5

So shall we be deaf in this loud call,
And see our friends and neighbours fall,
Let us with patience bear the rod,
And this day give our souls to God, The End

MR. THOS. PELL, ESQ. OF FAIRFIELD, CONN. & PELHAM PHYSICIAN AND CHIRURGEON

By Lockwood Barr*

Thomas Pell, after having received a good education, at the age of 16 years entered service as a Page Boy to Prince Charles, who, when he became Charles I, King of England, made Thomas Pell the Master of the Bedchamber of his Royal Highness. It was a position of importance and power in the royal household, and why Thos Pell in 1635—then 26 years of age—chose to abandon his place in the Palace and at Court to start life anew in the American Colonies, remains a mystery.

There is nothing in the archives of England to indicate that Thos. Pell received special training in any profession or business, yet in the purchase of the Pelhams and their successful colonization he proved himself an able diplomat and an able administrator. It is something of

* Author of *The History of The Ancient Town of Pelham Westchester County, N. Y.*, published 1946,—The Dietz Press, Richmond, Va.

a surprise to find that in the New England records he is often referred to as an attorney at court, but more often as a physician.

It has not been determined beyond all question of doubt, the ship on which he migrated or whether he first landed in the Virginia Colony or in the Massachusetts Colony. The Ship Planter listed a Thos. Pell—"Carpenter" and wife Marie and infant Marie—but these names were cancelled before the ship sailed. The Ship Speedwell listed a Thomas Pell—a "tailor". It is a fact that Thomas Pell evidently became a professional soldier—his sword for sale.

Pelliana, Vol. 1, No. 3, page 8 says "He (Thomas Pell) landed in Boston but soon found his way to the New Haven Colony, and 1637 finds him serving in the Pequot Indian War under Captain Mason as *Surgeon* and at Fort Saybrook with Lt. Gov. Lion Gardiner; and the early records of New Haven show him acting as attorney in several cases, but there is no evidence that he knew any more about surgery or law than about tailoring and carpentry. However, he was an extremely versatile young man and apparently a clever one, because he soon became an important person in the New Haven Colony" . . . subsequently one of the largest land owners in Fairfield, Conn. and in Pelham, Westchester County, New York.

The book *Saybrook at the Mouth of the Connecticut* by Gilman C. Gales (1935) on page 41, says in part as follows: In June 1637, the English at Saybrook attacked the Pequot Indians, and of this engagement Lt. Gov. Lion Gardiner wrote:

"And having staid there (at Saybrook) five or six days before we could agree, at last we old soldiers agreed about the way and act, and took 20 insufficient men from the eighty that came from Hartford, and sent them up again in a shallip, and Capt. Undrill and 20 of the lustiest of our men went in their rooms and I furnished them with such things as they wanted and sent *Mr. Pell the surgeon* with them, and the Lord God blessed their design and way so that they returned with victory, to the Glory of God and the honor of our nation, having slain 300 men, burnt their fort and taken many prisoners."

In the book *Land of the Patenties—Saybrook in Connecticut* (pub. 1935) by the Saybrook Tercentenary Commission, page 20, says under the heading of *Chirurgeons* of *ye Old Towne*, "Thomas Pell, Chirurgeon of Saybrook Fort is supposed to have been the first medical practitioner of the state. He taught Lady Fenwick* the use of herbs she raised in her 'wonderful herb garden' near the bank of the river, wherein grew everything for medical and household use, until she knew well how to care for the sick."

In the *History of the Colony of New Haven*, by Atwater, p. 367, is this reference. "Mr. Augur was at that time the only physician in New

*Note:—She was Lady Alice Apsley, dau. of Sir Edward Apsley, m. George Fenwick who came to Saybrook June 1636—and who named the settlement for Lord Saye and Lord Brooke—two of the Patenties.

Haven, both Mr. Pell and Mr. Westerhouse having removed some years before . . .". In New Haven records he is mentioned as late as 23 May 1659 as magistrate (from Fairfield where he then resided). In the New Haven church records 1646-7 is this reference—"In the cross seats at the end, 1st row Mr. Pell, Mr. Tutle, Bro. Fowler . . .".

In a list of early Fairfield settlers to whom land was allotted appears Block 5, Plot A, 5½ acres. Tract granted Thomas Pell, known commonly as "The None Such". The tract was bounded on the northwest by the Commons (now Elm St.) and on the southeast by Highway (now North Benson Road). This tract was sold by the heirs of Thos. Pell to Joshua Jennings. *"On Feb. 9, 1653 Dr. Thos. Pell* purchased Nathan Gold's house and home lot, next the Parsonage land."

The History of Fairfield, Conn. by Schenck, Vol. 1, page 68, says *"Dr.* Thos. Pell was a surgeon from Fort Saybrook who accompanied the first expedition against the Indian forts on the Thames and Mystic rivers". In several court proceedings in Fairfield, Thos. Pell was a witness testifying as one qualified to express medical opinions.

The purchase of 9000 acres in Pelham by Thos. Pell is not in the Fairfield record; neither is there any mention of his death in 1669, nor the arrival in 1670 of his heir Sir John.

In the Inventory of the estate of Thomas Pell, filed in Fairfield 2 Jan. 1660-70 there were these items:

3 surgeon's sawes	£1.10.00
Case of silver tools	£ 7.00
Surgeon's tools	£2.02.00
Surgeon's cheast with glasses	
Allopath with a small portion of drugs	£ 4.00
A parcel silver in a cheast druggs	£3.00.00
Gold scales and wayts	£ 7.00
Case barber's tooles	£1.05.00
Calpeper's dispensatory, with 3 other small books	£ 10.00
6 alchymy spoons	£ 15.00

Physicians and surgeons were few and far between in the beginning of the Colonies, and only the larger settlements could boast of an apothecary shop. Every housewife had her home-grown herbs and brews . . . every planter was an amateur physician, called upon to render medical aid to his tenants and slaves in emergencies. Since there is no proof that Thos. Pell studied medicine or served an apprenticeship under a physician or surgeon, he evidently was one of the many amateurs who practiced the art and mystery.

The price of these Bulletins is ten cents each.